

AJES

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Covering the broad range of issues that concern the Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Reserve, AJES exists to foster a dialogue about this area loved by so many. The journal purposely avoids serving as the vehicle for any single or special point of view. To the contrary, in searching for common ground AJES welcomes variety and a broad spectrum of opinion from its contributors.

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Prerogative

"Editorially Speaking"

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The waves from last November's political sea-change are lapping about the Adirondacks. Devolution, or *surrendering power to local authorities*, is the new approach Republicans are emphasizing in Congress and state capitols across the nation. Whether good or bad it certainly is different from the past thirty or more years. But such dramatic change sometimes makes possible things and ideas that were unthinkable before. For example, the mountain between advocates of ecological integrity and home rule in the Adirondacks seems lower now that economic constraints and political necessities have been raised. Perhaps, in this climate of change, some "bottom-up" process can be imagined and initiated to promote the four components of sustainable development: ecological integrity, local empowerment, social equity, and sustainable economies.

The motive force propelling devolution is economic, of course. Large structural deficits incurred by both the federal and state governments imply that government may be trying to do more than it can or, some would argue, should be doing. The key idea behind devolution is that more can be done with less—if it doesn't all have to be done the same. Local authorities, closer to the actual problems people experience, can recognize and apply a variety of solutions to achieve their goals more efficiently and effectively. One reason suggested for reduced costs and increased effectiveness at the local level is that charitable and civic-minded citizens can be expected to step in as volunteers with their time, energy, and imagination.

Here in the Adirondacks, while Republicans and Democrats struggle in Albany over increasingly difficult budget cuts, we need to remember that the problems we face in the Park are not going to be front-burner concerns for people in the rest of the State. This is a perennial problem for the Adirondacks. The State's deep fiscal crisis only makes it more poignant now. So despite potential tragedies, it is unlikely sufficient funds will be found to purchase all the ecologically important lands needed to protect the ecological integrity of the Adirondacks. Nor is it likely the State will adequately staff its regional administrative and regulatory agencies to the level necessary to repair and/or control the damage wrought by swarms of visitors. In short, devolution

could mean that residents and friends of the Adirondacks will have to find a way to protect the ecological integrity of this region themselves.

Local government must, therefore, cope with the pernicious economic development that threatens the Park. But local empowerment raises the inevitable specter of local economic values clashing with regional, even international, ecological values; the former are easily measured, with dollar values ascribed, while the latter are impossible to gauge, their values all priceless. Can local authorities, buffeted by the normal economic aspirations of their neighbors, friends, and families, assume the responsibility of protecting the Park's ecological integrity?

How far local authorities can actually go in protecting the Adirondacks ecological integrity depends, in part, on the institutional structure created to meld regional and local values. But also, as we have seen in the history of the Adirondack Park Agency, on the structure's acceptability. Acceptability, in turn, depends on a complex and constantly changing blend of perceptions about the degree of local empowerment, the equitable distribution of costs and benefits, and the range of available economic opportunities.

The equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of having this Park must be addressed because many residents believe they need to significantly expand their tax base to help slow their sky-rocketing taxes. As Pasquarello, *et al.*, pointed out in *AJES* 1994 1(1): 21, "...the revenues generated by private lands allow the New Yorker to have a park on the cheap in the Adirondacks." So what proportion of the costs of *properly* running a Park should the residents cover? The Adirondacks are an economically depressed region yet several million richer-than-average visitors come to the Park each year and their fluctuating loads require expanded utilities, roads, landfills, hospitals, and other governmental support services. The current government revenue system seems to reward communities that encourage second home development along their economically as well as ecologically valuable shorelines.

Ecologically conscious local empowerment will also require a significantly improved perception of the range of alternative economic opportunities available and the regulatory climate for sustainable development. Frankly, a reasonable level of affluence is a necessary precondition for appreciating and protecting ecological values—a lesson

with significant international implications. Fortunately, there is work that needs to be done to help make this Park not only a tourist's showcase and an ecological treasure but also a self-reliant economic entity capable of governing itself.

More infrastructure needs to be built and maintained if we are to properly locate economic development and protect the Park's environment. Incorporating infrastructure needs within sustainable development goals could also encourage the local production of many of the basic items sold within the Park, including some food (like wild game, range-fed meat products, fresh fruits and vegetables in season), building materials, and a significant proportion of the energy to heat and power our homes and businesses.

Thus, if New Yorkers hope that devolution will protect the Adirondack's ecological integrity then a "bottom-up" approach to sustainable development will have to be instituted. To be successful, a process of sustainable development promoting local empowerment will have to include equity concerns as well as a significant range of ecologically-economic opportunities.

This issue of *AJES*, like those before it, addresses a variety of topics related to the Adirondack Park as an international model of sustainable development. In our new "Letters" department, readers' comments help encourage a two-way exchange of ideas. In the "Forum," George Nagle of Saranac Lake offers us a vision statement for the Adirondacks and challenges readers to improve it. Claire Barnett, who developed a regional venture capital program for the Adirondacks, adds substance to several areas of concern in any practical vision for the Park. Lee Wasserman, Executive Director of Environmental Advocates in Albany, points out that "no one likes the current regulatory framework" and with that as the first point of agreement, proposes that all Adirondack perspectives be brought to a negotiating table to start afresh. G. Gordon Davis, President of Ecologically Sustainable Development, Inc. of Elizabethtown, describes how lessons learned in the Adirondacks have been used to help protect Russia's Lake Baikal. And Alan Hicks, Senior Wildlife Biologist at DEC's Wildlife Resources Center in Delmar, tells of the return of the moose, formerly an extirpated species and one of the reasons for working so hard at protecting the Adirondacks. Finally, in "Penultimate," Tom Rumney (SUNY—Plattsburgh) previews the Adirondack Research Consortium's Second Annual Conference.

LETTERS

To the Editors:

Thanks for a great Fall, 1994, edition (*AJES* volume 1, number 2). I will focus particularly on articles by Dean LeFebvre and Robin Ulmer.

Dean LeFebvre, immediate past President of the Association of Adirondack Towns and Villages, provides useful commentary on legislative needs for the Adirondack Park. It is not complete, understandably. But, combined with some of Robin Ulmer's thinking, one can see the interrelationships aligning and a more holistic approach taking shape over the course of time. Our Association held a visions conference during the Adirondack Park Centennial year of 1992, and dedicated our proceedings to the AATV, challenging them to convene a similar conference that helps weave the multi-colored fabric of Adirondack life and needs together. I view Dean LeFebvre's article as a partial, but excellent agenda to kick off such a gathering. Naturally, we disagree on some points, particularly management philosophy and goals regarding state forest preserve, but I'll leave that for another day. Naturally, I would add some items to the list of reforms and changes which are not on Dean's list. However, on state payment of taxes on such lands, reimbursement to localities on 480a lands, the need to "capture" value-added wood products within the region, the need for targeted investment in infrastructure that is supportive of clean water goals, and support for work done by organizations like the Adirondack Economic Development Corporation we definitely find common conceptual ground.

In espousing legislation that specifically funds infrastructural development, such as water and sewer lines and treatment systems, Dean LeFebvre misses one key point - restoration of funds to help communities do comprehensive community planning. Where is infrastructure needed? Where will it achieve community goals? Where is the water and labor/volunteer force to support it? Where are the income-generating businesses which will best take advantage of it? What performance standards will the community development work be tested against? These and other questions must be addressed by comprehensive and annually funded community planning assistance *before* the slug of infrastructure moneys which LeFebvre espouses can be efficiently ex-

pended. I hope Dean and other local community leaders at AATV put this item near the top of their agendas, and reach out to groups like mine for joint visits to state legislative offices. When Dean LeFebvre and I, or our colleagues gain the courage to lobby jointly on this type of community assistance, it will be a watershed event.

And this is where Robin Ulmer's article on watershed planning meshes so well with Mr. LeFebvre's legislative vision. As she notes so well, current Adirondack approaches in Albany focus largely on legislation, but to date fail to support in a technical fashion watershed initiatives which are by definition more comprehensive in scope and just as (if not more) protective of resources, but also more community-based, voluntary and non-regulatory in orientation. Robin asks for government support "to watershed groups who utilize the economic value of water quality for economic development." She tries to harness organizational and technological best management practices — the human and project capital — to capitalize economically and protect strategically water quality in the Adirondack Park. Water quality protection can be defined as local park development, fly fishing access, educational tours, strategic recycling businesses, to name just a few examples.

So, for local government leaders and for environmentalists to constructively influence legislation *together* requires a sense of community, a sense of the whole Adirondack Park, and a watershed and non-regulatory perspective. Targeted investment in planning, technical transfer and infrastructure — all or part of an Adirondack "clean waters" legislative agenda — can have immense long-term, beneficial consequences for the Adirondack Park and its watershed-minded citizens, and can be facilitated by several pieces of targeted legislation. But, if this is to be the great Adirondack Park which we all have a stake in, let's have the community planning up and running first, and directing the infrastructure, not visa-versa.

Thanks, Dean and Robin, for thought-provoking articles.

David H. Gibson
Executive Director

Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks
Schenectady, New York

To the Editors:

As the 'new kid on the block' at the helm of the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) for one year, I have been reading with much interest the first two issues of *AJES*. The problems and disagreements faced in Upstate New York are certainly not unique. Having lived as well as traveled from Maine to Florida, California to Alaska, I've become acutely aware of regional as well as national controversies. My work experience has helped enlighten my sensitivities and perspectives. Frankly, the arguments raised here in the Adirondacks by the environmental community, the property rights advocates, the general public, and other "cultures" within the Park are all viewpoints and concerns voiced in many other areas of the country.

That being said, I really think it is time we — representing the many players involved in the Adirondacks — all come to the table to begin discussions on what we can agree to agree upon, and what we can agree to disagree on. The next step, perhaps, would be to begin bridging the gap between our differences. As an example of what can be accomplished, such groups as the Keystone Center, an environmental mediation organization from Colorado, and others have helped bring consensus to such issues as U.S. Navy plastic dumping, strategic management of wolves in Alaska, regional biodiversity, and private timber issues in Louisiana. We here in the Adirondacks have an opportunity for similar dialogue and resolution.

Where, then, do we begin? There are no lack of issues for discussion such as representation by Park residents on the Adirondack Park Agency — how many and how selected? And there are recommendations by state study commissions, councils and task forces, some of which are controversial. These are certainly places to begin a dialogue. Several additional themes appear in *AJES* articles: the need for sustainable but environmentally compatible economic development, a cognizance of social needs, a summons for more public education, the various roles of politicians, a need to be proactive, and the call for moderation and a logical approach to problem solving. What is not acceptable in the problem-solving process, however, is hostility, or worse yet, sporadic acts of violence. We at the Adirondack Mountain Club see no place for this kind of behavior.

ADK has taken, and continues to take, a

reasoned approach in our work with the many players within the Park, especially through partnership efforts. In our fire tower program, ADK is working with DEC, the towns of Indian Lake and Hadley, the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service, and community groups to rehabilitate fire towers as mountain-top education sites. ADK worked with the Town of Indian Lake, DEC, and the U.S. Forest Service to put together the state's first Forest Legacy Project, a land acquisition which provides canoe/kayak/raft access to the Indian River and the Hudson Gorge. ADK's staff counsel, Neil Woodworth, worked for more than a year with community leaders, zoning officials, and regional attorneys to produce a highly-praised report for the Governor on reforms for the Adirondack Park Agency. Woodworth also joined regional government leaders and DEC officials to negotiate major portions of the state's new Open Space Plan, including new policies on consultation with local governments and limits on the use of eminent domain.

These are but a few examples of the many partnerships ADK has undertaken. While ADK will continue to defend the "forever wild" clause of the State Constitution protecting Forest Preserve lands, we see numerous continuing opportunities to forge cooperative approaches to problem solving. Where economically feasible, and within the bounds of my authority, I will continue to commit ADK staff and our limited resources to pursue further efforts at working out solutions, avoiding gridlock and stalemates, and developing liaisons. And we hope others will join in these efforts. All participants need to honestly try to solve our problems, come to the table with no hidden agendas, and be willing to negotiate. If we succeed, a phenomenal precedent could be set for similar initiatives far outside the boundaries of New York State. As they say, 'it's time to talk.'

Albert Manville II, Executive Director
Adirondack Mountain Club
Lake George, N.Y.

CORRECTION

The following are corrected calculations for "Investigating Adirondack Lakes" in the Fall, 1994 issue, p. 31: "Lake Victoria . . . a meter of mud represented about 1500 years"; "Lake Turkana . . . rates close to 3 mm/year"; "Adirondack Lakes typically average roughly 1 mm/year."